

CASB Convention 2009

Delivery of Services

- Presentation by:
 - John Augenblick, President, Augenblick ,Palaich and Associates
 - Tracie Rainey, Executive Director, Colorado School Finance Project

What can we learn?

- School District Delivery of Services
 - Knowledge from other states?
- Differentiation of consolidation of services and of school districts
 - What goals are trying to be accomplished



SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION: STATUS AND RESEARCH

John Augenblick
Augenblick, Palaich and Associates

December 2009



CSFP Interest in School District Organization

- How education services are delivered
- Recognizes that services can be organized in numerous ways
- Believes the issue is extremely complex given:
 - Distribution of people in states
 - Existing geographical/political boundaries
 - Changes in technology
 - Multitude of roles played by schools

What CSFP Asked APA to DO

- Examine the issue of school district consolidation
- CSFP had no specific objective in mind and that APA should not reach a specific conclusion...
- ... particularly about Colorado
- Focus on what research says about the impacts of organization structure and change in structure

Objectives of the Work

- Review the historical development of school districts
- Examine how the number of schools/districts has changed over time
- Examine the research about school district consolidation:
 - Cost savings
 - Program scope
 - Impact on community
 - Alternative delivery approaches

How We Went About the Work

- Gathered and organized information about school districts
- Reviewed the literature (research and “research”)
- Interviewed several people

Table 1: Change Over Time in Numbers of Students, School Districts and Schools in the United States

Year	Students		School Districts			One-Teacher Schools		Elementary Schools		Secondary Schools	
	Number (In millions)	% Change from Prior Period	Number	% Change from Prior Period	Average Size	Number	% Change from Prior Period	Number	% Change from Prior Period	Number	% Change from Prior Period
1919-20	21.6		--			187,948		--		--	
1939-40	25.7	19.0%	117,108		190	113,600	-39.6%	--		24,542	
1959-60	36.1	40.5%	40,520	-65.4%	640	20,213	-82.2%	71,640		25,784	5.1%
1970-71	45.9	27.1%	17,995	-55.6%	2,010	1,815	-91.0%	63,985	-10.7%	25,352	-1.7%
1980-81	40.9	-10.9%	15,912	-11.6%	2,890	921	-49.3%	60,148	-6.0%	24,362	-3.9%
1990-91	41.2	0.7%	15,358	-3.5%	2,670	617	-33.0%	60,723	1.0%	23,460	-3.7%
1995-96	44.4	7.8%	14,766	-3.9%	2,800	474	-23.2%	63,487	4.6%	23,793	1.4%
2000-01	46.6	5.0%	14,859	0.6%	2,990	411	-13.3%	65,286	2.8%	27,090	13.9%
2005-06	48.0	3.0%	14,166	-4.7%	3,290	335	-18.5%	72,663	11.3%	29,507	8.9%

Table 2: Distribution of All Districts in the United States (with Reported Size) and Students by District Size Group in 2005-06

District Enrollment Size Group								
	>25,000	10,000-24,999	5,000-9,999	2,500-4,999	1,000-2,499	600-999	300-599	<300
Number of Districts	269	594	1,066	2,015	3,335	1,768	1,895	2,857
Percentage of All Districts	1.9%	4.3%	7.7%	14.6%	24.2%	12.8%	13.7%	20.7%
Number of Students	16,376,213	9,055,547	7,349,010	7,114,942	5,442,588	1,391,314	835,430	403,887
Percentage of All Students	34.1%	18.9%	15.3%	14.8%	11.3%	2.9%	1.7%	0.8%
Average Size of Districts	60,878	15,245	6,894	3,531	1,632	787	441	141

Research on Consolidation

- Research vs. advocacy for or against
- Overview
 - Optimal size of school districts
 - Costs and efficiency
 - Academic quality (achievement and opportunity)
 - Community/economic impacts and governance



Optimal District Size

- Depends on goals and student needs
- Most studies identify a U-shaped cost (per student) optimization curve
- Recommended “optimal” size varies greatly among studies and among rural and urban communities
- The effects of district size are mitigated by a host of other factors, such as school size



Costs and Efficiency

- District size research provides some support for economies of scale
- Efficiency research (cost of achieving an outcome) suggests that costs per high school graduate are similar between large and small districts
- Research on costs before & after consolidation is mixed
- Long-term savings may be possible in some cases
- Potential economies of scale are often offset by post-consolidation increases in transportation, capital outlay, and average salaries

Academic Quality

- Studies of district size find that students in smaller districts often outperform students in larger districts
- Low-income students tend to benefit more than high-income students from small district size
- Academic and extracurricular opportunities are generally more extensive in larger districts
- Small remote districts can have trouble recruiting high quality teachers
- Larger districts tend to offer more opportunities for teacher professional development and collaboration

Community Impacts and Governance

- District consolidation often leads to school closure(s)
- Communities with schools tend to have notable economic advantages over those without schools
- School closures frequently have negative economic impacts on rural communities
- It does not appear that school closures have significant negative impacts on property values or tax rates
- School closures tend to decrease parent and civic participation
- Large or consolidated districts may be more bureaucratic and less responsive to citizens



Alternatives to Consolidation

- Intermediate Units
 - BOCS, BOCES, IUs, etc.
 - Providing services on an “as needed” basis with reimbursement by users of services
 - Academic, particularly for high-need students
 - Academic support (specialists, professional development, etc.)
 - Administrative support (accounting, purchasing, etc.)



Alternatives to Consolidation

- Technology
 - Delivery of services using virtual courses
- Regionalization
 - Multiple elementary districts belonging to a single secondary district
 - Multiple districts forming a technology service area

Conclusions

- Don't use a "one size fits all" approach; develop a process and provide support (e.g., analysis, incentives).
- Define what objective/goal trying to accomplish
- The use of intermediate units can provide better service and reduce expenditures in a variety of areas from low-enrollment courses, to serving high-cost student populations, to administrative support; interviewees universally noted the value of IUs in staff development.

Colorado Snapshot

- 178 School Districts
- 63 Counties
- CASB Regions - 12
- BOCES - 21
- Regional Service Areas
- Enrollment Trends

What services are school districts sharing?

- Your examples ?
- Need ideas ?
- What are goals of community and school districts as changes occur?
- Other ?

- Full report and detailed information
 - www.cosfp.org
 - Tracie.rainey@earthlink.net